

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MARKEY APPLAUDS BI-PARTISAN VOTE TO CALL FOR SCREENING OF ALL CARGO ON PASSENGER PLANES

Washington, DC: Representative Ed Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security, released the following statement regarding the successful Motion to Instruct Conferees to the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, sponsored by Rep. Martin Sabo (D-MN). The House voted 347-74 to pass the motion that tells the Senate to keep the Markey amendment requiring the Transportation Security Administration to screen or inspect all cargo loaded onto passenger planes.

Rep. Markey stated, "This strong bi-partisan statement by the House sends a message to the House and Senate Conferees that screening air cargo on passenger planes is a top priority. Out in the open, in a public vote, Republicans and Democrats agree that the gaping hole in aviation security, the ability of a terrorist to ship explosives or themselves in a box completely unscreened and un-inspected, is dangerous and inexcusable. When the Homeland Security Conference Committee convenes behind closed doors in the coming days, nearly two years after September 11, they must act to close the air cargo loophole."

"Yesterday the Dallas Morning News reported that a man from New York shipped himself, as cargo, to Dallas in a box. We're very lucky that Charles McKinley was a tourist and not a terrorist. This horrific breach of security demonstrates that a cargo catastrophe may be just around the corner if the Bush Administration and the Air Cargo industry don't stop cutting corners," Rep. Markey continued.

"What the Transportation Security Administration likes to call a 'known shipper' program, I like to call an 'unknown cargo' program. Thankfully Charles McKinley was just an industrious prankster," said Markey. "The next time, it could be an industrious terrorist. The fact is, the known shipper program can't tell the difference between a terrorist and a tourist and it doesn't appear to make any difference to the TSA."

- According to the General Accounting Office (GAO) 22 percent of all the air cargo that is transported in the United States is loaded aboard passenger planes.
- Pan Am Flight 103 was brought down in 1988 over Lockerbie, Scotland by a bomb contained in unscreened baggage; Air India flight 182 was downed in 1985 off the coast of Ireland by a bomb placed in unscreened baggage; a bomb hidden in cargo exploded on an American Airlines flight in 1979, forcing the plane to make an emergency landing at Dulles airport. This bomb was later linked to the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski.
- It has been estimated that air cargo shipments will increase by 49% domestically and 86% internationally over the next 10 years. (FAA estimate) We're very lucky that Charles McKinley was a tourist and not a terrorist. This horrific breach of security demonstrates that a cargo catastrophe may be just around the corner if the Bush Administration and the Air Cargo industry don't stop cutting corners.

For further information, visit www.house.gov/markey.

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